



Monforton School

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EXHIBIT 12
DATE 2/16/07
HB 479

February 16, 2007

The Honorable Rick Jore, Chairman
House Education Committee
Montana House of Representatives
P. O. Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

Dear Representative Jore:

On behalf of the Monforton School District 27 Board of Trustees, I speak as a proponent of HB 479. Monforton is a K – 8 rural school district located at Four Corners between Bozeman and Belgrade. We have 163 students enrolled and between 35% - 50% of our families have incomes low enough to qualify them for free and reduced breakfast and lunch.

Last year, when school districts around the United States were required to create Wellness Policies, I really took notice of what students were eating. I was disturbed by what I saw. A ten-year old who has spent years drinking eating Fruit Loops for breakfast and Top Ramen for lunch is not in prime condition for learning.

Not only was I disturbed by what some students brought from home, I was disturbed by what my school was serving. We have only the equipment for heating food and keeping it warm. Consequently, this meant that even though our meals met the USDA requirements for a healthy lunch, the frozen and then reheated food tended to be highly processed, full of preservatives, not fresh, and not appetizing to kids. Participation was low, food cost was high and lots of food went into the garbage.

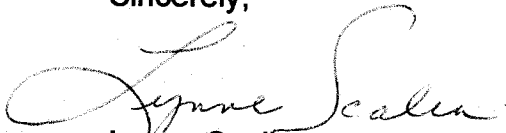
Here is how this one-time money in HB 479 could help a district like Monforton's. We have made many changes in our school food program this year. One of the most important changes is that we have created partnerships with two local groceries, and a meat shop in our school district that only carries locally grown beef, pork and chicken. The food we are serving is fresh or cooked from scratch. Food tastes good. Kids are eating fresh fruits and vegetables. Participation in the school food program is up, although still not where it could be. Very little food is thrown away. In fact, kids now come for seconds and a handful

"Growing and learning together."

of our 7th and 8th grade boys hang back to for thirds. We probably have the healthiest concession stand around. Financially, we are finally breaking even. **And** we are getting the opportunity to support some of those who support us - local farmers, ranchers and grocers. Purchase of food for 100 or so meals a day won't make or break any of these local businesses, but it helps. I've thought that during the 2005-2006 school year, over 17 million breakfasts and lunches were served in Montana public schools. If more of this food was purchased and prepared locally, what impact might this have on the Montana economy?

In order for many of our schools in high poverty areas or where there is low participation to run decent school nutrition programs, we need some start-up capital to purchase basic equipment, like, for example, a reliable stove, mixer, a freezer and shelving for Monforton. The one-time only funds provided in HB 479, would help to give money to 50 districts in Montana that have the greatest needs. Your consideration of this bill is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lynne Scalia". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Lynne Scalia
Superintendent & Principal
Monforton School District 27